

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, PO, US
SUBJ: US APPROACH TO CAETANO SUGGESTED BY MINISTER
OF EDUCATION

REF: STATE 063598

SUMMARY: LIBERAL MINISTER OF EDUCATION HAS SUGGESTED
TO EMBOFF THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF MESSAGE REACHED
GOP AT HIGH LEVEL THAT ADOPTION BY PORTUGAL OF POLICY
AKIN IN SOME RESPECTS TO THAT PROPOSED BY GENERAL
SPINOLA WOULD BE WELCOME BY US AND MAKE IT EASIER FOR
US TO DEFEND PORTUGAL IN CONGRESSIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
FORA. MINISTER SUGGESTED DIRECT CONVEYANCE OF SUCH
MESSAGE BY AMBASSADOR TO CAETANO. WE DO NOT BELIEVE
SUCH A MESSAGE TO PM WOULD BE USEFUL--AT THIS TIME.
HOWEVER, AS AZORES NEGOTIATIONS MOVE AHEAD, USEFULNESS
OF SUCH A DEMARCHE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED. END SUMMARY

1. DURING LUNCHEON CONVERSATION AT EMBASSY RESIDENCE
MINISTER OF EDUCATION VEIGA SIMAO AND DCM DISCUSSED
CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION FOLLOWING PUBLICATION SPINOLA
BOOK. PREFACING REMARKS BY ASSURING MINISTER HE HAD NO
INTENTION INTERFERE IN INTERNAL PORTUGUESE POLITICS, DCM
SAID THAT IF PORTUGAL WERE TO ADOPT POLICY TOWARDS OVER-
SEAS TERRITORIES WHICH APPROXIMATED CERTAIN OF SPINOLA
PROPOSALS, IT WOULD MAKE IT MUCH EASIER FOR COUNTRIES
LIKE US WHO WANT TO BE PORTUGAL'S FRIENDS TO DEFEND
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PORTUGAL IN CONGRESSIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORA. THIS

PARTICULARLY TRUE WITH RESPECT TO CALL BY SPINOLA FOR DEMONSTRATION BY AFRICAN PEOPLES OF SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH PORTUGAL. REFERRING TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER IN WHICH HE HAD STATED THAT NO PLEBISCITE WHICH HAD RESULTS FAVORABLE TO PORTUGAL WOULD BE ACCEPTED BY THE WORLD, DCM SAID THAT PM UNDOUBTEDLY CORRECT WITH RESPECT TO SUCH UNCOMPROMISING CRITICS AS SEKOU TOURE, BUT HE NOT NECESSARILY CORRECT AS REGARDS US, SENGHOR, AND MANY OTHERS, SUCH AS NORDIC COUNTRIES NOW ON BRINK OF RECOGNITION OF GUINEA BISSAU.

2. MINISTER RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY BY STATING THAT HE FELT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT AT PRESENT JUNCTURE THAT STATEMENT ALONG ABOVE LINES BE MADE BY FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES TO PRIME MINISTER. HE WENT ON TO SUGGEST THAT HE FELT IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IF US AMBASSADOR WERE TO HAVE FRANK, INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH CAETANO OR FOREIGN MINISTER PATRICIO ALONG THESE LINES. ASKED IF HE THOUGHT PRIME MINISTER COULD IN FACT MAKE ANY MOVES IN THIS DIRECTION AT PRESENT MOMENT WHEN THE RIGHT WING SEEMED TO BE IN THE ASCENDANCY, VEIGA SIMAO INDICATED THAT SOME THINGS TAKE TIME BUT THAT HE FELT CAETANO WAS ESSENTIALLY FOR GREATER LIBERALIZATION AND THAT SUCH AN APPROACH BY US AMBASSADOR AT PRESENT MOMENT COULD STRENGTHEN CAETANO'S RESOLVE TO FOLLOW THROUGH AT APPROPRIATE TIME.

3. COMMENT: VEIGA SIMAO, MOST LIBERAL OF PRESENT MINISTERS, NOT UNEXPECTEDLY REVEALED HIS SYMPATHY FOR MAIN LINES OF SPINOLA PROPOSAL. HIS RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROACH BY AMBASSADOR MAY SUGGEST THAT HE FEELS CAETANO IS DISPOSED IN DIRECTION OF SPINOLA SOLUTION, BUT NEEDS TO HAVE HIS INCLINATION BUTTRESSED BY OUTSIDE REPRESENTATIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, MINISTER MAY HAVE FLOATED IDEA AS TRIAL BALLOON. WHILE VEIGA SIMAO HAS BEEN IN CABINET SINCE 1970, HIS ESTIMATE OF CAETANO'S LIBERAL PREDILECTIONS ON OVERSEAS MATTERS MAY BE INFLUENCED BY WISHFUL THINKING. ALSO, ALTHOUGH HIS SUGGESTION SEEMED UNSTUDIED, HE MAY ALSO SEE SUCH A US APPROACH AS HELPFUL TO COUNTERACT RIGHTIST PRESSURES ON CAETANO AIMED INTER ALIA AT PERSUADING

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PM TO RID HIS CABINET OF ITS LIBERAL EDUCATION MINISTER.

4. AFTER REFLECTION, AND IN LIGHT CONSIDERATIONS RAISED REFTEL, WE FEEL THIS IS NOT TIME FOR THE DEMARCHE SUGGESTED BY THE MINISTER. WHILE US VIEWS ARE IMPORTANT TO PORTUGAL, WE DOUBT THAT OUR ARGUMENT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL GIVEN THE TENSE INTERNAL SITUATION AND MIGHT BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, PARTICULARLY COMING FROM A NEW AMBASSADOR WITH

SLIGHT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH EITHER CAETANO OR
PATRICIO.

5. NONETHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT POSSIBILITY OF SUCH A
DEMARCHE SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND AS AZORES NEGOTIATIONS
PROGRESS TO POINT WHERE USG COULD USEFULLY RAISE WITH
PORTUGUESE THE IDEA THAT A MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF SOME
OF SPINOLA'S PROPOSALS COULD BE USEFUL IN SOFTENING
CONGRESSIONAL HOSTILITY TO US QUID. DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE
AND COMMENTS ON THIS POINT WOULD BE WELCOME. END COMMENT
SCOTT

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